

REMARKS

Claims 1-44 are pending in the present application. In the Office Action of December 30, 2002, claims 1-22 were allowed and claims 23-44 were rejected. In the present response, Applicants add claims 45-81, cancels claims 37-39 and 42, and traverse the rejections as follows. The inventors in the present patent application have declared under oath, in an affidavit under 37 CFR 131, that they had conceived the invention prior to the effective date of U.S. patent number 6,353,611 to Norris et al. and prior to the effective date of U.S. patent number 5,717,830 to Sigler et al., and were diligent in a constructively reducing the invention to practice.

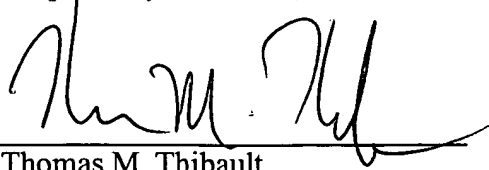
Accordingly, all rejections to the claims as being unpatentable over Norris in view of Sigler and/or further in view of Paneth et al (U.S. patent number 6,393,002) under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) should be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of any fees that may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 17 - 0026.

Respectfully submitted,

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